

**Remarks at a Memorial Day
Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia**

May 29, 1995

Thank you very much, Secretary Perry, Secretary Brown, Major General Gorden, Chaplain Cottingham, General and Mrs. Shalikhshvili and to the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their wives, to all the members of the Armed Forces who are here, and the veterans, especially to the POW's and their family members and the family members of MIA's whose sacrifice and service we honored today just a few moments ago with the unveiling of the special stamp in honor of POW's and MIA's, and of course, to Sergeant Major Rodriguez and Mrs. Rodriguez.

Sergeant Major, if you had known 50 years ago you were going to be here today and had 50 years to get ready, you could not have done any better job than you did, and we thank you. This fine American was decorated by President Roosevelt with the Purple Heart for his action in combat on Iwo Jima. He later led an honor guard for President Truman. He represents the vital ties to the past that inspires us today, and we thank him and all others for their service.

Today we feel close to that past and to all those who stood fast when our freedom was in peril 50 years ago. We remember the valiant individuals from all of our wars who fell while defending our Nation. They fought so that we might have the freedom which too many of us take for granted but, at least on this day, we know is still our greatest blessing.

At this sacred moment, we put aside all that might otherwise divide us to recall the honor that these men and women brought to their families and their communities and the glory they bestowed upon our beloved Nation. All across our great country today, in cities and towns great and small, wreaths and flags adorn our cemeteries. Friends and family members and those who simply are grateful for their liberties will gather for a parade or visit the graves of some of these heroes, tell a new generation the stories of how America was kept free and strong. We must remember to do justice to their memo-

ries. We must remember that so we can go forward.

Especially in this last year, the 50th since World War II, we Americans have remembered and paid homage to the generation that fought that great struggle in ceremonies in Normandy, at Nettuno Beach in Italy, at Cambridge Cemetery in England, the Manila Cemetery in the Philippines, the Iwo Jima Memorial here in Arlington, and in Moscow.

As we look across the gulf of time and look at the veterans of that conflict who still are among us, we continue to draw strength from their marvelous achievement. We remember anew the indomitable power of free men and women united by a just cause.

Fifty years ago today, the war in Europe was over. American armed forces worked to restore order to a wrecked continent, taking charge of shattered communities, tending to the survivors of the awful concentration camps. But the celebration of victory was short because our battle-weary Nation was shifting troops and energies from one theater to another. Little was certain. Virtually every household still had someone in uniform, and no one could say even then who would survive.

In the Pacific war, fighting raged on in the Philippines. Okinawa, the bloodiest battle in the Far East, was already almost 2 months old and far, far from over. By the time it ended on June 22, that small island would claim the lives of more than 12,000 Americans.

Still, our forces never faltered. Half a world away from their homes, far from their families, they fought for their country, their loved ones, and for the ideals that have kept this country going now for more than 200 years. They knew their mission was unparalleled in human history: to fight for freedom, for democracy, and for human dignity all the world over. In those distant places and harrowing times, ordinary people performed extraordinary deeds.

Many who fell there are now here in Arlington, in this hallowed ground. We come here to honor their sacrifice, to give them thanks for safeguarding our homes and our liberties, and for giving us another 50 years of freedom. But we also come here because we understand what they fought for. Here,

among the dead, in the perfect rows of stone, we see the life of America for which they sacrificed so much.

Four graves around here today tell a good story. Right over there, down Grant Drive, is the grave of Colonel Justice Chambers of the United States Marine Corps Reserve. For his extraordinary courage in taking vital high ground during the landing on Iwo Jima, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Just next to him lies Lieutenant Commander Barbara Allen Rainey. She was the mother of two daughters and the Navy's first female aviator. She died in a plane crash in 1982. Further down the walk lies the grave of Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd, Jr., known throughout the world as the first person ever to fly over the North Pole. And next to him lies General Daniel "Chappie" James, a Tuskegee Airman who flew nearly 200 combat missions, a pilot in Korea and Vietnam as well. He rose through the ranks to become the first African-American four-star general.

These four were very different in race and gender, service and generation. But they were united in their service to America. Together, their lives are proof of perhaps our greatest American truth: that a nation of many really can be brought forth as one. Together, they show the tremendous strength that not only our Armed Forces but our entire Nation has drawn from our remarkable diversity. They remind us of the riches our democracy creates by bringing the benefits of liberty to all Americans, regardless of their race or gender or station in life. They remind us of why so many have sacrificed so much for the American idea.

Today, more than ever, we rededicate ourselves to the vision for which they live. Generations before ours met challenges to democracy and freedom, defeated the threats of fascism and communism, and now it is for us to rise to the new challenges posed by the forces of darkness and disintegration in this age at home and abroad.

In an uncertain world, we still know we must maintain armed forces that are the best-trained, best-equipped, and best-prepared in the world. That is the surest guarantee of our security and the surest guarantee that we will not repeat the mistakes of the past, when America disarmed encouraged people to

abuse the decent liberties we all are willing to fight for.

Now, we must finish the security work of the last 50 years by ending the nuclear threat once and for all. I am very proud of the fact, and I know all of you are, that today, we and the Russians are destroying the weapons of our nuclear arsenal and that for the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age, no Russian missiles are pointed at the people of the United States of America.

I am proud of the fact that the nations of the world recently voted to extend indefinitely the Non-Proliferation Treaty and that Russia and the other states of the former Soviet Union and the United States were on the same side, asking countries to forswear ever developing nuclear weapons.

I know we have more to do in trying to stem the proliferation of biological and chemical weapons and to defeat the forces of terrorism around the world. No free country is immune from them. But we can do this, and we must.

In honor of all those who have fallen, from the dawn of our Nation to this moment, we resolve to uphold not only their memories but their ideals: the vision of America, free and strong, conferring the benefits of our beloved land on all our citizens. They sacrificed so that we could do this.

Our debt is, therefore, to continue freedom's never-ending work, to build a Nation worthy of all those who fell for it, to pass to coming generations all that we have inherited and enjoyed. This must be our common purpose: to make sure all Americans are able to make the most of their freedoms and their God-given abilities and still, still, to reaffirm our conviction that we are, from many, one.

And so we go forth from this place today, remembering the lives of people like Chambers, Rainey, Byrd, and James. From their example, let us carry forth that passion and let us strengthen our national unity.

God bless you all, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. at Arlington National Cemetery.

Remarks on Clean Water Legislation
May 30, 1995

Thank you very much. This country would be better off if we had a few more little old ladies in tennis shoes, don't you think, like Minny Pohlmann? [Applause] Thank you, Minny, for your introduction, and more importantly, thank you for the many years of work you have done to clean up the Potomac and to set an example about responsible environmentalism.

Secretary Babbitt; Administrator Browner; to the CEQ Chairman, Katie McGinty; George Frampton; Bob Stanton; Mike Brown; to Neal Fitzpatrick, the conservation director of the Audubon Naturalist Society; and the two young people who came up with me, Hannah and Michael—where are they, where are the young people who were with me? Thank you very much. And to all the schoolchildren who are here—I wish you could have heard what they were saying over there as I was looking at some of the species that live in this water, because it is still not as pure as it ought to be, and reading the sign over there. Have you all read the sign on the creek? “Fish from these waters contain PCB's. Do not eat catfish, carp, or eel from these waters. You may eat a half a pound per month of largemouth bass or a half a pound per week of sunfish or other fish. Choose to eat younger and smaller fish of legal size. Always skin the fish, trim away the fat, and cook so that it drains away. The practice of catch and release is encouraged. Swimming is prohibited still due to high levels of bacteria.”

To those who say we have nothing more to do to clean up America's waterways, I urge them to come here to Pierce Mill and read the sign.

We still have a lot of work to do on this, the most simple necessity of our lives, water. Pierce Mill and this part of Rock Creek Park are very important in the history of our country. Teddy Roosevelt used to come here to walk and to look at the creek, to get a little exercise.

I admire Teddy Roosevelt for many reasons, but one of the most important is that he taught us the necessity of preserving our natural resources and protecting our natural

world. He established the National Wildlife Refuges. The Forest Service grew in size and vision under his leadership. His actions led to the creation of the National Park Service, which takes care of this very park. This great Republican President taught us that it would be foolhardy and spendthrift to try to play politics with our environmental treasures. Caring for our land wasn't just for Democrats or just for Republicans, it was an American cause and just plain common sense. That was true at the beginning of this century when Teddy Roosevelt was President; it's even more true at the end of this century as we look toward a new millennium.

Roosevelt's legacy of nonpartisanship on the environment extended throughout most of this century. It was under another Republican President, Richard Nixon, that we created the Environmental Protection Agency, passed the Clean Water Act, and created the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

For a long time, therefore, Americans have stood as one in saying no to things like dirty water and yes to giving our children an environment as unspoiled as their hopes and dreams. It is because of this commitment on the part of millions of Americans of both parties and all races and ethnic backgrounds, people from every region of our country and all walks of economic life, that last week you were able to take your children—last weekend—to a beach that was clean or a lake that was full of fish or a river that was safe to swim in. And that's why I want to talk to you about some of the things that are going on now that present a threat to that way of life.

Some Members of the new Congress, operating with major industry lobbyists, have come up with a bill that would roll back a quarter-century of bipartisan progress in public health and environmental protection. The bill would let polluted water back into our lives. It would increase the threat of improperly treated sewage being released into our waters. The sewage could then wash up on our beaches, maybe on the very beach where you taught your children to swim.

Members of Congress who support this legislation actually have the nerve to call their bill the “Clean Water Act.” And the House